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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 066192

FOLLOWING REPEAT PORT OF SPAIN 0812 SENT ACTION SECSTATE MAR 13.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0812

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, TD
SUBJECT: OMEGA TRINIDAD

REF: A) PORT OF SPAIN 563; B) OSLO 1140

1. I MET WITH FM DONALDSON ON MARCH 13 IN FOLLOW-UP OF MY EARLIER DISCUSSION WITH PERMSEC BALLAH REQUESTING RECONSIDERATION OF THE CLOSING OF OMEGA TRINIDAD. AFTER I HAD EXPLAINED THE REASONS FOR USG INTEREST IN THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF OMEGA HERE UNTIL THE AUSTRALIAN STATION BECOMES OPERATIONAL, DONALDSON REPLIED AS HE HAD PREVIOUSLY THAT OMEGA COULD BE POLITICALLY EMBARRASSING TO THE GOTT. THE OPPOSITION HAD RAISED THE ISSUE IN PARLIAMENT LAST YEAR AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE AT THAT TIME, WHICH HAD BEEN BASED ON INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE USG, HAD TURNED OUT NOT TO BE CORRECT. THE GOTT DID NOT WANT TO BE CONFRONTED WITH ANOTHER QUESTION ON OMEGA IN PARLIAMENT AND HAVE TO GIVE A DIFFERENT ANSWER.
I POINTED OUT THAT SINCE THE BASES AGREEMENT NOW HAD
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EXPIRED, THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PROVISIONS OF THAT AGREEMENT AND OMEGA WAS CLEARER THAN EVER, AND THIS FACT SHOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE GOVERNMENT IN ANSWERING ANY QUESTION THAT MIGHT ARISE IN PARLIAMENT.

2. DONALDSON THEN ASKED ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATION AND CONTROL OF OMEGA TRINIDAD

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AS COMPARED TO OTHER STATIONS. SPECIFICALLY, HE
WANTED TO KNOW HOW OMEGA IN JAPAN, ARGENTINA, NORWAY,
REUNION AND LIBERIA WAS SET UP AND MANAGED, AS WELL AS
WHAT SUCH ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE FOR THE FUTURE
AUSTRALIAN STATION. I REMINDED HIM THAT THE DRAFT
PROPOSAL WE HAD PRESENTED IN JULY, 1977, HAD INCLUDED
PROVISIONS FOR GOTT PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT
AND OPERATION OF OMEGA TRINIDAD AND UNDERTOOK TO
PROVIDE HIM THE INFORMATION HE REQUESTED.

3. DONALDSON THEN SAID THAT THE QUESTION OF OMEGA
HAD BEEN RAISED IN THE NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT (HE DID
NOT INDICATE WHEN) AFTER LOCAL PRESS STORIES HAD
APPEARED ON THE SUBJECT. THE ISSUE THERE, AS HE UNDER-
STOOD IT, HAD BEEN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN CONCERNING OMEGA
IF A WAR BROKE OUT AND HOW WOULD NEW ZEALAND BE AFFECTED
(WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS REFERRING TO IN MENTIONING
NEW ZEALAND AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY BACKGROUND ON IT
THE DEPARTMENT CAN PROVIDE. OUR SUSPICION IS THAT
THIS IS A MISTAKEN REFERENCE TO THE DEBATE OVER THE
AUSTRALIAN STATION). DONALDSON CONTINUED THAT THE
GOTT WOULD WANT ANY AGREEMENT ON OMEGA TO CONTAIN
"ASSURANCES THAT A MEASURE OF PROTECTION" WOULD BE
AFFORDED TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF TRINIDAD'S
BECOMING A MILITARY TARGET IN THE EVENT OF INTER-
NATIONAL HOSTILITIES. OMEGA, OF COURSE, DID
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HAVE MILITARY USES, AND TRINIDAD WOULD NOT WANT TO
BE "CAUGHT NAKED WITHOUT PROTECTION" ON THAT ACCOUNT
IF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS AROSE. THE GOTT REGARDED
THIS AS A KEY CONSIDERATION AND WANTED TO KNOW WHAT
THE USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROPOSE FOR MINIMIZING
THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO T&T UNDER A NEW AGREEMENT.
DONALDSON CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT HE HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED
BY CABINET TO RAISE THE FOREGOING POINTS (PARA 2 AND
3). IF THE USG WOULD MAKE PROPOSALS WHICH ADEQUATELY
TOOK THESE POINTS INTO ACCOUNT, CABINET WOULD BE PRE-
PARED TO GIVE FURTHER CONSIDERATION TO OUR REQUEST.

4. DONALDSON MENTIONED IN PASSING THE DEMARCHE MADE
BY NORWAY IN NEW YORK ON OMEGA (REF B). EMBASSY IS
NOT AWARE WHAT OTHER PREPRESENTATIONS, IF ANY, HAVE
BEEN MADE BY INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS TO GOTT.

5. DONALDSON CONCLUDED BY SAYING HE WOULD BE AWAY
FOR MOST OF THE NEXT TWO WEEKS BUT WOULD LIKE TO MEET
WITH ME AGAIN ON OMEGA RIGHT AFTER EASTER (MARCH 26).

6. COMMENT. DONALDSON'S LOW-KEY PRESENTATION DID

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NOT CONVEY ANY SENSE OF PRESSURE OR URGENCY. WE CONSIDER IT A POSITIVE SIGN THAT HE IS KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN ON OMEGA AND HAS SPECIFIC CABINET AUTHORITY TO DO SO. AT PRESENT IT APPEARS THAT SATIDFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF OMEGA TRINIDAD PLUS THE "ASSURANCES OF A MEASURE OF PROTECTION" FOR TRINIDAD IN THE CASE OF HOSTILITIES WHICH HE INQUIRED ABOUT MAY BE THE KEY TO RESOLVING THE OMEGA ISSUE. I WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING THE INFORMATION HE REQUESTED AND FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS BY MARCH 24 AT THE LATEST.
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